

Western Pacific Surveillance and Response

Instructions to Authors

ABOUT WPSAR

The aims of WPSAR are:

1. to provide an open access journal to publish articles on the surveillance of and response to public health events and emergencies in the WHO Western Pacific Region and in areas with relevance to the Western Pacific Region; and
2. to build capacity in communicating epidemiological and operational research within the WHO Western Pacific Region.

Our objectives are:

1. to provide a platform for people working in surveillance and response in the Western Pacific Region to share their scientific and operational findings;
2. to publish a broad range of articles not limited to conventional research articles:
 - to disseminate short reports on outbreak investigations;
 - to publish analyses of surveillance data on communicable diseases;
 - to encourage the publication of evaluations of new and existing surveillance systems;
 - to promote the use of risk assessment for public health by facilitating risk assessment articles;
 - to support preparedness and response to public health events and emergencies through the dissemination of lessons learnt from such events; and
3. to build capacity in communicating epidemiological and operational findings in the Western Pacific Region through pre-submission assistance.

Scope

WPSAR covers all activities related to the surveillance of and response to public health events and emergencies, with a focus on topics that are relevant to the Western Pacific Region. Public health events may be acute or ongoing and can fall under any of the following areas: communicable diseases, natural disasters, food safety, bioterrorism, and chemical and radiological events. Other events and topics may also be considered. Response activities include those for acute events, e.g. responding to natural disasters, or for response to cases or epidemics of disease.

Why publish in WPSAR?

WPSAR is not limited to conventional research. It publishes a broad range of articles, including short outbreak investigation reports, lessons from the field, analyses of surveillance data, evaluations of surveillance systems and risk assessments for public health events. There are limited opportunities to publish these types of articles in other

journals. We also accept the more traditional original research, perspectives and case reports/case series articles.

WPSAR is an open access journal, meaning it is free of charge for both readers and authors. It is also a continuous publication, which means articles are published as soon as they have completed the review and editing process.

WPSAR accepts all articles that fit the scope of the journal and that meet the minimum publication standards. We are especially interested in field epidemiology and operational research.

WPSAR also aims to build capacity in scientific writing and encourages submissions from authors with little or no experience in publishing in peer-reviewed journals. The Coordinating Editor often works with new authors on their submissions to ensure that articles fit the scope of WPSAR and meet the minimum standards for publication.

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS FOR ARTICLE WRITING AND SUBMISSION

WPSAR follows the guidelines of the *Uniform Requirements for Articles Submitted to Biomedical Journals by the International Committee for Medical Journal Editors* (ICMJE).

Formatting guidelines

Please submit your article in a Microsoft® Office Word file or a compatible file in English. Double-spaced, 12-point Arial font should be used to format your article. Please remove all automatic formatting including automatic numbering and referencing before submitting.

The format of the article will depend on the article type. Please see below for specific instructions per article type.

Perspective

An unstructured article discussing an issue regarding the surveillance of and response to public health events. The scope of the discussion must be clearly defined.

- Word limit: ≤ 1000 words
- ≤ 10 references
- ≤ 1 figure/graph/picture/table

Outbreak Investigation Report

A short article describing a field or outbreak investigation including how it was detected, investigated and controlled. Rapid risk assessments undertaken during these investigations are also encouraged. These articles may be considered for rapid publication.

- Structured article with an abstract of ≤ 250 words and sections for introduction, methods, results and discussion

- Structured abstract with sections for objective, methods, results and discussion
- Word limit: ≤ 1500 words
- ≤ 15 references
- ≤ 2 figures/graphs/pictures/tables

More comprehensive investigations can be submitted as Original Research.

Surveillance Report

A summary and interpretation of surveillance data over a given period of time. A description of the surveillance system and the limitations of the data collected must be included.

- Unstructured abstract of ≤ 250 words
- Word limit: ≤ 2000 words
- ≤ 15 references
- ≤ 10 figures/graphs/pictures/tables

Surveillance System Implementation/Evaluation

An article describing the implementation of a new surveillance system or an evaluation of an existing surveillance system used to detect public health events.

- Unstructured abstract of ≤ 250 words
- Word limit: ≤ 2000 words
- ≤ 15 references
- ≤ 3 figures/graphs/pictures/tables

Risk Assessment

An article detailing a risk assessment of a public health threat or event.

- Structured article with an abstract ≤ 250 words and sections for introduction (including risk question/s), risk assessment methodology, results, discussion and recommendations
- Structured abstract with objectives, method, results and discussion
- The results should include an assessment and/or characterization of the hazard, exposure and context, as well as the level of risk or risk characterization. The limitations must also be included. Risk management may be included in the discussion.
- Word limit: ≤ 3000 words
- ≤ 30 references
- ≤ 3 figures/graphs/pictures/tables

Original Research

Original research articles may include epidemiological studies including outbreak investigations.

- Structured article with an abstract of ≤ 250 words and sections for introduction, methods, results and discussion
- Structured abstract with objective, methods, results and discussion
- Word limit: ≤ 3000 words

- ≤ 40 references
- ≤ 5 figures/graphs/pictures/tables

Brief Report

A short report describing any aspect of the surveillance of and response to public health events and emergencies. These can be unstructured, or structured as per an original research article.

- Word limit: ≤ 1000 words
- ≤ 10 references
- ≤ 1 figure/graph/picture/table

Lessons from the Field

An article describing a problem faced in field epidemiology or during a public health event and the experience in trying to overcome the problem.

- Structured article with an abstract ≤ 250 words and sections for problem, context, action, lesson(s) learnt or outcome and discussion
- Structured abstract with the headings of problem, context, action, lesson(s) learnt and discussion
- Word limit: ≤ 2000 words
- ≤ 15 references
- ≤ 3 figures/graphs/pictures/tables

Case Report/Series

An unstructured article describing an unusual case or series of cases of public health significance. Subheadings may be used to increase the readability of the article.

- Unstructured abstract of ≤ 250 words
- Word limit: ≤ 2000 words
- ≤ 15 references
- ≤ 3 figures/graphs/pictures/tables

Regional Analysis

An article providing an analysis of a topic for the Western Pacific Region, typically authored by WHO staff as part of their routine work on behalf of Member States. Regional Analyses do not undergo peer review.

Letter to the Editor

A letter commenting on a previously published article OR a letter commenting on the theme of the issue. Letters do not undergo peer review.

- Word limit: ≤ 500 words
- ≤ 5 references
- ≤ 1 figure/graph/picture/table

News, Meeting and Conference Reports

News items and meeting and conference reports do not undergo peer review. Please contact the Coordinating Editor at WPSAR@wpro.who.int if you intend on submitting such an article.

Illustrations

Refer to the article type for the limit on illustrations (figures/graphs/pictures). Please insert all illustrations at the end of the article with titles. Each illustration must be referred to in the text and must be understood on its own. Use Microsoft® Office Excel for graphs and Microsoft® Office Word for tables and diagrams. Additionally, please provide a Microsoft® Office Excel spreadsheet of the data used to create a graph. Footnotes should be placed under the illustration and should use the following symbols in superscript format: *, †, ‡, §, ||, **, ††, etc.

References

Reference the most recent and relevant publications. Please use the Vancouver referencing style with in-text citations and a bibliography at the end of the text. Sample references can be viewed on the National Institutes of Health website.

Place the bibliography at the end of the article text and not as footnotes. Write journal names in full. Use superscript sequential numbering for citing references in the text. Place the number after any punctuation. For example:

These results are consistent with the original study.¹¹

Reference personal communication in the text only and include the person's full name and institution.

Caution should be used in referencing websites; it should be done only when their content has been substantially described in the article.

Peer review process

Every article is initially screened by the Editorial Team to ensure it fits the scope of the journal. All articles, with the exception of regional analyses, letters to the editor, news items and meeting and conference reports, then undergo external peer review by two reviewers. This blind peer review process ensures that the reviewer does not know the identity of the author(s) and the author(s) do not know the identity of the reviewer. Significant effort is made to make this process timely, but since it relies on the availability and cooperation of persons external to the journal, it can take considerable time.

Upon receipt of the reviews, the Coordinating Editor assesses the comments and recommendations made by the reviewers, and then decides on the outcome of the peer review process. One of four options will be chosen: accept submission, accept with revisions, submit for review, or decline submission. The corresponding author will be advised of this outcome.

If the article has been accepted or accepted with revisions are required, you will be invited to revise your article according to the reviewer comments. A separate MS Word document outlining how you addressed each of the reviewer comments is also required. You must indicate the page and paragraph numbers where the changes were made and should provide reasons for not making a suggested change. Both the changes and reasons will be assessed against the reviewer comments by the Coordinating Editor and may require further clarification from the authors. Once all comments have been adequately addressed, the article will commence the publication process.

If the outcome of the review process is "submit for review", then the same process is followed. However, the resubmitted article and responses to the reviewer comments are sent back to the original reviewers for another round of peer review. You will be asked to respond to a second round of reviewer comments, which will again be assessed by the Coordinating Editor. Once both sets of reviewer comments have been adequately addressed, the article will commence the publication process.

The publication process comprises rigorous editing for content and style by an external technical editor, followed by layout and proofreading. Authors may be asked to provide further information or clarifications during these stages. An article is not formally accepted for publication until these stages have been completed and approval has been granted by the Editorial Team. The authors will also have an opportunity to approve the final proof prior to publication on the WPSAR website. The article will be batched with others in the next quarterly issue.

Authorship

As per the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), all authors should have contributed significantly to the article through one or more of the following in each category A, B and C:

A

- Study design
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Data interpretation

B

- Drafting the article
- Critically revising the article

C

- Final approval of the article for submission

Any other contributors may be listed in the Acknowledgements section.

Acknowledgements

Contributors who do not fulfil the authorship requirements may be acknowledged. Permission from all contributors in the acknowledgement section should be sought. We assume that permission has been granted and will not follow up with the authors to confirm.

Ethics and permissions

It is the responsibility of authors to gain appropriate ethics approval for their work. A statement of ethics approval obtained or an explanation of why ethics approval was not required should be included for all articles during the submission process.

License for publication

Prior to publication, all authors are asked to sign a licence to publish that grants exclusive copyright license to the World Health Organization.

Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest is defined by ICMJE as “when an author or author’s institution, reviewer, or editor has financial or personal relationships that inappropriately influence (bias) his or her actions”. Conflicts of interest may be financial, institutional, research or personal. A relationship does not always represent a conflict of interest and does not necessarily preclude publication in WPSAR. All authors and reviewers will be required to state any potential conflicts of interest, which will be assessed by the Editorial Team.

Funding

Authors will be required to state the sources of funding for their work.

Photographs for cover

If authors have taken photographs that are relevant to their article, they may be submitted for consideration for publication on the cover of the issue. Submission of a photograph does not guarantee its publication.

Language

Articles should be written in English. Authors who require assistance with preparing their articles in English should contact WPSAR at WPSAR@wpro.who.int. Once published, all abstracts and most articles are translated into Chinese.

Article submission process

Submit articles to the Coordinating Editor through the online journal management system. When submitting the article, you will be requested to provide the following:

- a cover letter describing the article and why it should be published;
- a title page with:
 - the article title,
 - a short title,
 - a brief description of the article of ≤ 50 words,
 - ≤ 7 keywords,
 - full names of all authors and institutions,
 - full contact details of the corresponding author,
 - data in an MS Excel spreadsheet for any graphs
 - names and e-mail addresses of two suggested reviewers (optional but recommended);
- acknowledgements, conflicts of interest, ethics statement and funding information (attached as a separate file to ensure a blind review);
- an MS Word file or equivalent of the article; and
- a scanned copy of the WPSAR licence for publication signed by all authors.

With the online journal management system, you will be able to track the progress of your article through the editorial process. If you encounter any difficulties with this system, please refer to our WPSAR online journal system – User guide for authors.

Corrections

If authors of a published article become aware of any errors with the article, they should contact the Coordinating Editor at WPSAR@wpro.who.int. Corrections will be published online.